

A FURTHER SYNONYM IN THE GENUS *CONICERA*  
 MEIGEN WITH A REVISED LIST OF  
 THE BRITISH SPECIES  
 (Diptera: Phoridae)

By R. H. L. DISNEY\*

I have recently (Disney, 1980a, 1980b), reported new synonymies in the genus *Conicera* Meigen. The purpose of the present note is to report a further synonym and to provide a revised check list of the British species. Borgmeier (1963) remarks of the genus *Conicera* "mistakes are comprehensible in such a difficult genus". The findings of the present paper further confirm my experience that the difficulties encountered in this genus have largely been created by taxonomists!

What is *Conicera fallens* Schmitz?

Schmitz (1953) separates the coffin fly, *C. tibialis* Schmitz, from *C. fallens* (and three other species) by the couplet "Vordertarsen ♂ nicht oder ganz unbedeutend länger als t1. Die *Conicera* der menschlichen Leichen und särke, auch im Freien . . . . . *tibialis* Schmitz. — Vordertarsen länger als t1, mindestens im Verhältnis 5 : 4 . . . . ."

Borgmeier (1963) likewise distinguishes *C. tibialis* from *C. fallens* (and other species) on the relative lengths of the foretarsus and tibia thus "Fore tarsus subequal to tibia (9:8; ♂ ♀). . . . . *tibialis* Schmitz.

—Fore tarsus longer than tibia . . . . ."

In the descriptions given by these authors the ratio of the foretarsus to the tibia is given as 1.12 — 1.13:1 in the male and 1.14:1 in the female for *C. tibialis*. In *C. fallens* the figure for the males is 1.25:1, and for the females 1.38:1.

In my collections I have a pair of this section of the genus *Conicera* caught *in copula* (at Chilmark, Wiltshire, 8 August 1977). The front leg ratios are 1.12:1 for the male and 1.24:1 for the female. Thus on the information given by Schmitz and Borgmeier the male is *C. tibialis* and the female is intermediate between *C. tibialis* and *C. fallens*.

In two males, indistinguishable from the above male in terms of genitalia and other features, from Germany (from Rhineland, sent to the author by Dr. M. Boness) the ratios are 1.22:1 and 1.12:1. That is to say the first is closer to *C. fallens* and the latter is in agreement with *C. tibialis*.

In view of this unsatisfactory situation I have recorded the ratios for a series of 48 males caught in a single day (3 June 1980) in one water trap set on the Tarn Close (Malham Tarn, North Yorkshire, Grid ref. 34/894671). The ratios varied from 1.02 — 1.29, with a mean of 1.14 (S.D. = 0.06). These flies were clearly a single species in terms of their genitalia and the sensory organ on the

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middle leg. The only other *Conicera* in the water trap were a single female of the same species and a single male of *Conicera similis* (Haliday). The observations on the males of the first species are plotted in Fig. 1. On the horizontal axis the fore-leg ratios for *C. tibialis* and *C. fallens*, according to the literature, are indicated. In the sample examined it is evident that the mean is just within the definition of *C. tibialis*. The definition for *C. fallens* is within the expected distribution about this mean but outside the limits of its standard deviation. This would account for the rarity of *C. fallens* in collections, and the data suggest, therefore, the *C. fallens* represents one extreme of a range of variation in *C. tibialis*.

In the light of the above observations I have examined (through the co-operation of Dr. H. Ulrich, Zoologisches Forschungsinstitut und Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn) the holotype, a paratype and other specimens of *C. fallens* determined by the late Fr. Schmitz. I can detect no consistent difference between these and specimens of *C. tibialis*. I conclude, therefore, that *C. fallens* is a synonym of *C. tibialis*.

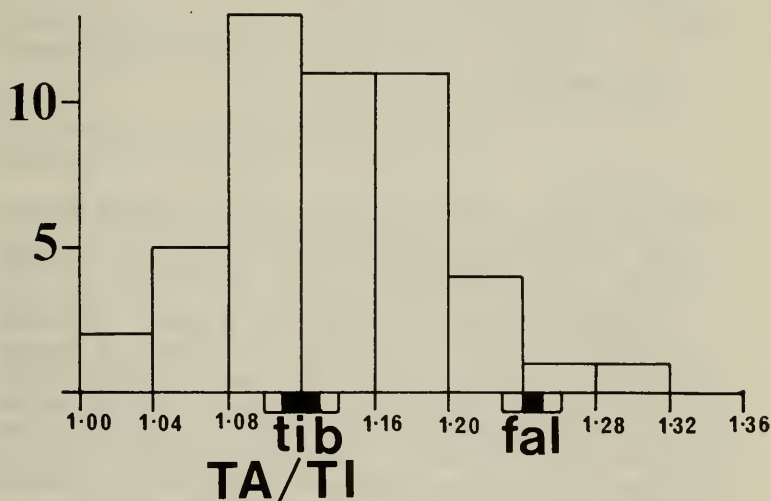


Fig. 1. Frequency histogram for ratio of foretarsus to foretibia (TA/TI) of the right forelegs of a sample of 48 *Conicera tibialis* procured in a water trap on 3 June 1980. tib = ratio for *C. tibialis* according to literature, fal = ratio for '*C. fallens*' according to literature.

#### Revised Check List of British Conicera

The latest Check List (Colyer and Smith, 1976) gives 9 species of *Conicera* for Britain. The following amended list gives 6 species as follows:

- CONICERA Meigen, 1830
- S. CONICERA S. S.
- dauci* Meigen, 1830)
- atra* (Meigen, 1830)

- S. HYPOCERINA Malloch, 1913  
*floricola* Schmitz, 1938  
*similis* auctt., nec. Haliday, 1833  
*minuscula* Schmitz, 1953;  
*schnittmanni* Schmitz, 1926;  
*tarsalis* Schmitz, 1920;  
S. TRITOCNICERA Schmitz, 1952;  
*similis* (Haliday, 1833);  
*pauxilla* Schmitz, 1920;  
*tibialis* Schmitz, 1925;  
*fallens* Schmitz, 1948. syn nov.

#### Acknowledgements

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#### References

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Colyer, C. N. and Smith, K. G. V., 1976. In Kloet, G. S. and Hincks, W.D. A check list of British Insects. 2nd Edition. Part 5: Diptera and Siphonoptera. *Handbks. Ident. Brit. Insects.* 9 (5). 57 – 61.  
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Disney, R. H. L., 1980b. What is *Conicera minuscula* Schmitz (Diptera: Phoridae)? *Entomologist's Gaz.* 31: 202.  
Schmitz, H., 1953. In Lindner, E. (Ed). *Die Fliegen der palaearktischen Region 33 Phoridae Lief.* 171: 273 – 320.

THE FROSTED GREEN: POLYPLOCA RIDENS FABRICIUS AB. FUMOSA WARNECKE – While trunk-hunting at Brickett Wood, Hertfordshire on 16th April 1981, I was delighted to find at rest on a birch, an extreme melanic form of this local thyatirid in excellent condition. Reference to the R.C.K. collection in the BMNH showed it to conform to ab. *fumosa* Warnecke, which is represented there by four examples, three of which are also from Hertfordshire (Tring, two, 1965; Harpenden, one, 1952), and a single specimen from Woking, Surrey, 1976. Ab. *fumosa* appears nearest to ab. *unicolor* Cockayne (cf. original description in *Ent. Rec.*, 63: 31, plt. 2, fig. 7), but is more extreme. The fact that it may not have been recorded prior to 1952, and its apparently rather restricted distribution, may indicate that *fumosa* is of only relatively recent occurrence in Britain. – J. M. CHALMERS-HUNT.

THE LARGE TORTOISESHELL: NYMPHALIS POLYCHLOROS L. IN KENT. – I captured a male Large Tortoiseshell at St. Margaret's Bay, Kent on the 28th of August 1980, and exhibited it at a meeting of the Kent Lepidopterists' Group at Maidstone Museum on 21st March 1981 – A. D. HOWELL, 12, Harrow Dene, St. Peters, Broadstairs, Kent.